

Australian Research Grants Committee and the Zoology Department, University of Western Australia. The Wildlife Authority authorized my camping on the island. I thank Dr Serventy for his comments on an earlier version of this note.

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OBITUARY

IVAN CARNABY (1908-1974)

Ivan Clarence Carnaby, an Honorary Life Member of the Club and one of the most original of recent amateur ornithologists in this State, died at too early an age at the Boyup Brook Hospital on November 10, 1974. He suffered a heart attack as he was preparing his vehicle for a field trip to the Kimberley Division. He was born at Subiaco on July 24, 1908. His father, a genial moustached figure, was well-known on the Swan River as the proprietor of a popular boat-shed at Nedlands until he died in 1935. The family lived in a large two-storied house at no. 20 The Avenue.



Ivan Carnaby, 1946

Ivan had little formal schooling as he was troubled with bronchitis throughout his childhood. In 1922 his father bought an orchard at Parkerville so that Ivan could be in the country each winter to get away from the damp air. One or other brother stayed with him. From early youth he was interested in birds and at Parkerville he started an egg collection with which he persevered for the rest of his life. Right from the start he kept notes on all the nests he found, data which proved very productive to other workers. Late in 1927 the orchard was passed in as a deposit on the purchase of a wheat farm at Lake Grace. This also was a family concern. The brothers shared work on the wheat

farm but unfortunately got nothing out of it. They lost everything when the farm was finally abandoned in 1933 owing to the Depression. It was typical of his character that Ivan did not abandon the debts he had incurred during this trying period but it was some 15 years before he finally liquidated his financial obligations.

It was while he was at Lake Grace that Mrs. B. E. Cannon of Kukerin reported the discovery of the nesting of the Banded Stilt at Lake Grace in August 1930, and of the probable nesting at the same time at Lake King. But he heard the news too late to see any nesting operations at either lake. As he had no ear at the time he pedalled his push-bike the 75 miles to Lake King, over a rough road and impeded by head winds.

While the farm was still in possession of the family, looked after by his brother Keith, Ivan went prospecting for gold, mainly at Hatters' Hill, north-east of Lake King, and at Fields Find. Early in 1934 he went to the North-West with his younger brother Colin, then 18. They did contract fencing and well-sinking at various sheep stations including Landor, Mt. Clere and Ullawarra. Angus Robinson was managing Ullawarra then, and this was the first time that these two ornithologists, both egg collectors, had met, though each knew of the other's interests.

In 1935 Ivan and Colin, jointly, under the names of I. C. and C. F. Carnaby, took up a station property at the headwaters of the Ashburton River, Yilbrinna. He chose this in preference to Paraburdoo. Tunnel Creek ran through the middle of the station into the Ashburton, with a pool, Yilbrinna Pool, in its bed between towering cliffs. They were only getting started when Colin accidentally shot himself when pulling a .303 rifle out of the tent. Their brother Keith describes the poignant incident: "Ivan was out getting a kangaroo for food at the time and heard the shot. When he came back he found Colin dead. He covered him up and made him as safe as possible from the dingoes, and then went to the nearest neighbours, at Turee Creek 30 miles away, for help. This happened on the 1st April, 1937. Colin was just 21½ years old. The Police came back with him three days later and Ivan dug a grave on the spot."

Ivan returned to Perth. He helped his brother Keith at the boat-building shed at Nedlands and made extensive natural history tours with two other naturalists—Henry Steedman and Horace Brown. Henry Steedman, who had been for 28 years the head gardener at the South Perth Zoo, found himself suddenly without gainful employment when he was retrenched from the zoo in November 1928 on the grounds of financial stringency. He then tried to support himself by collecting native plants and seeds. Because he did not drive he availed himself of the services of others to take him around. His tours with Ivan in 1937 and 1938 included Coolgardie, Kalgoorlie, Mt. Ridley, Esperance, Hopetoun, Ravensthorpe, the Barrens, Forrestania, Lake Grace, Bunbury, Cockleshell Gully, Jurien Bay and Geraldton. A eucalypt which they collected at Barberton was named *Eucalyptus carnabyi* by Blakely and Steedman in *The Australian Naturalist*, 10 (8), 1941, p. 259. The description was prepared by Blakely and stated that the new species was "named in honour of Isaac Carnaby, entomologist and naturalist." This error in the Christian name has been copied by several later writers on eucalypts. The species is now considered to be a hybrid between *E. drummondii* and *E. macrocarpa* (G. C. Chippendale, *Eucalypts of the Western Australian Goldfields*, 1973), who states that only one plant is still known near Piawaning; a photograph is given of it). Horace Brown was an entomologist specialising in beetles. He had trained as an electrical engineer in New South Wales and "has since utilised his profession as a means of visiting suitable collecting grounds" (Musgrave, *Bibliography of Australian Entomology*, 1932, p. 32). In the 1920's and early 1930's he operated a shop, Electric Utilities, in Perth. He had his own transport but valued Ivan's bushcraft. Athol Douglas, of the Western Australian Museum, recalls that Horace Brown panicked easily and was readily lost. Ivan was a superb bushman. Brown instilled an interest in jewel beetles in Ivan as well as in Keith, who also occasionally accompanied them.

Ivan, accompanied by Keith, returned to the North-West in April 1938, bringing with them a headstone for Colin's grave as well as their father's ashes. The site became a family shrine, as later their mother's ashes were brought there and it is proposed to honour Ivan's wish to inter his there too. The grave will become a registered grave site.

While they were in the north in 1938 the two brothers obtained fencing contracts and erected 56 miles of fencing on Mulgul Station, south of Ivan's old Yilbrinna Station.

Back in Perth Ivan for a while took on an activity which seemed singularly out of character with his past life—he became a teacher in a dancing studio! But he was interested in music and was a good player on the piano-accordion.

This came to an end with the outbreak of World War II in 1939. Ivan joined up and served in the infantry in various sectors within the State. The opportunity to partake in some measure of natural history work came when he was stationed at North-West Cape ("Potshot") between early January and late October 1943. Some of his wartime experiences, and Ivan's comments on the officers under whom he served, are amusingly recounted in Marshall and Drysdale's book, *Journey Among Men* (1962).

The War over he became acquainted with and impressed the Perth naturalists. One of the first to appreciate his skill as a bush naturalist was the late Hugh Wilson, then an engineer with the Goldfields Water Supply Department, and a prominent Western Australian ornithologist. He thought Ivan would be an eminently suitable fauna warden if such a post were to become available—which it wasn't at the time. Life in Perth did not long attract Ivan and in 1945 he took up a large tract of virgin land on the Toodyay Road, at Red Creek, near Bailup and which he opened up as a grazing property.

On April 2, 1946 he married Stella Nell Pearce, a talented musician, a member of the Perth Symphony Orchestra and teacher of the violin. She gave up all this and went to live at the new home in Bailup. There many members of the Naturalists' Club visited them and where, despite the primitive surroundings, Stella was a gracious hostess. At their various homes in the bush and country she baked bread and maintained a household which won the admiration of visitors. Older Club members will recall the memorable excursions made to their Bailup property in 1952. From this base many of us made field trips in Ivan's company. One such, with myself and V. N. Serventy, was organized in August 1953 to investigate whether Banded Stilts were nesting on Lake King.

Eventually he sold out profitably and Ivan and Stella, with their young family, moved to Carnarvon in late 1954. Whilst there he obtained a temporary appointment, in 1955, with the CSIRO's Wildlife Section as field assistant to E. H. M. ("Tim") Ealey, then working on the ecology of the Euro at Woodstock Station. Later that year, through the instrumentality of Dr. A. J. Marshall, who took a great interest in Ivan's field work on the effects of environmental factors on the breeding seasons of birds, he obtained a small grant from the Science and Industry Endowment Fund.

In February 1957 Ivan left Carnarvon to enter a partnership in a lead-mining show at Mary's Springs, north of Galena, near the Murehison River crossing, but this association proved unsatisfactory. Next year he transferred to Yalgoo to become a partner in a small gold-mining enterprise. But like his other mining venture this, too, went awry. Eventually the Carnabys returned to the city and took up residence at East Victoria Park. From here he periodically went to the outback on various jobs, which were usually so arranged to enable him to engage in appealing egg-collecting forays.

He also accompanied other naturalists on numerous excursions. One of the most extensive began in September 1958 when he linked up with a party consisting of Dr. A. J. Marshall, Ken Buller and myself, going north to visit Barrow Island, the Montebellos and the Kimberleys. This introduction to the ornithology of the Kimberley Division led him to

visit the area a number of times later. Other naturalists with whom he went on field trips included Phil Fuller and Julian Ford.

Unhappily Ivan's lengthy absences from home led to an estrangement with Stella and the eventual breakdown of the marriage. The four children remained with her and it was a deep personal satisfaction to Ivan that they all made good in after life. Ivan himself decided to go farming again at Lake Grace and took up a property there at the end of 1965. It served as a new base for collecting trips, particularly to the Kimberleys which now attracted him for nesting studies.

The whole of his extensive Kimberley data, which included details of every nest found, was handed over to Dr. G. M. Storr of the Western Australian Museum. These are being incorporated in the checklist of Kimberley birds now in preparation. The Kimberley trip for which he was preparing just before his death was intended to take him over the Mitchell plateau to Port Warrender, where he planned to stay over the "Wet". His Museum colleagues dissuaded him from this project, which would have left him stranded and alone for many weeks, without possibility of aid if anything went wrong. Instead he was persuaded to make for Wyndham which would be safer in the "Wet" and where much work still required to be done. But he collapsed at his brother's home at Wilga whilst loading up his vehicle for the journey and died soon after.

In addition to his primary bird work he collected reptiles for Dr. Storr. A new species of skink was named after him, *Cryptoblepharus carnabyi*.

His friends found him a congenial companion and were always grateful at his resourcefulness in the bush in getting out of difficulties. He had a wizard-like skill in repairing broken-down vehicles, and it was said of him that he could virtually re-build a car with any materials at hand. This mechanical ability enabled him to get by for years with motor vehicles an ordinary individual would discard as near-wrecks. But when coming into the City, however, he would become very apprehensive with them once he crossed the Causeway: he could never be certain whether his "bomb" might stop at embarrassing situations. Thus he always tried to avoid having to make right-hand turns. When at last he did buy a new vehicle, in 1955, he was so punctiliously careful of it that he was exacting in his choice of co-drivers. His friends would consider it a compliment if invited to share the driving!

He was kind and generous to brother-naturalists and aided all in their work. How helpful he was to Major Whittell and myself when we were preparing our *Birds of Western Australia* is evident by the frequency of his name in its pages as the source of facts.

In his natural history studies Ivan was an acute and thoughtful observer, and it is a pity that his publishing record is comparatively slight. He found writing arduous and left most of the recording of his observations to others.

As an egg collector he was no mere accumulator of egg shells. He generalised from his field work on the control of breeding seasons in this State. At the meeting of the local branch of the Royal Australasian Ornithologists' Union on August 30, 1946 I gave a talk on the factors controlling breeding and soon became aware of Ivan's keen gaze rivetted on me. He astonished me during the ensuing discussion by delivering a very erudite lecture, quite off the cuff, on nesting timetables in the North-West, dividing various species into three main categories—those which would nest any time of the year immediately after good rains; those which nested at a particular season, but only if the conditions were right; and those that observed a regular nesting period irrespective of the nature of the season. He rattled off lists of species as examples of each category (*Western Australian Bird Notes*, No. 4, December 18, 1946, p. 11). Major Whittell and I featured these generalisations in the "Nesting Seasons" section of our *Birds of Western Australia*, 1948. Later he elaborated on his ideas in an article in the *Western Australian Naturalist* (vol. 4, 1954, p. 149). It was this which brought him to the attention of Dr. A. J. Marshall.

Several important distribution discoveries of arid-country birds were first made known by Ivan. One striking example was the Banded White-face, which was first brought to light as a new species by the Horn Expedition to Central Australia in 1894. It was not known to be in Western Australia until the late Otto Lipfert collected specimens along the Canning Stock Route in 1930-31. Then we were all surprised to be told by Ivan that it actually occurred much further west, to the junction of the Lyons and Gascoyne Rivers. Subsequently Michael Brooker extended the limits even further westwards, to Callagiddy Station, not far from Carnarvon. Ivan also provided notable new information on the nomadism of the White-browed Wood-Swallow. Before his observations, in 1964, about the only previous knowledge of the occurrence of the species in this State was F. Lawson Whitlock's record as far back as 1909 in the Wiluna area. Ivan observed local nesting, including the occurrence of a hybrid with the Masked Wood-Swallow, in the Yalgoo-Paynes Find area. He was also the first to record the occurrence of the Elegant Parrot in the North-West—at Woodlands Station in the Gascoyne in 1955, then the northern known limit of the radial expansion of the species, and which has since extended to the Fortescue.

One of his outstanding discoveries was his recognition of a distinct short-billed population of the White-tailed Black Cockatoo. He hinted at its being an undescribed race in his article on Lake Grace birds, published in the *Emu* in 1933 but was advised to eliminate the formal description he had intended. In 1948, with more material available, he named this as *Calyptorhynchus baudinii latirostris*. Recent work by Denis Saunders of CSIRO indicates that this form is quite distinct and may have to be elevated to full species status.

A list of the bird articles by Ivan Carnaby, to 1950, is given in Major Whittell's *The Literature of Australian Birds*, 1954, p. 117. Those published subsequently are:

Nesting Seasons of Western Australian Birds. *W.A. Nat.*, 4 (7), 1954: 149-156.

"Clifton Downs" as a collecting locality for birds. *W.A. Nat.*, 4 (7), 1954: 172.

The White-browed Wood-Swallow in Western Australia. *The Emu*, 65 (1), 1965: 74.

Records by him are also given in articles published by other authors, including P. J. Fuller, R. E. Johnstone, J. R. Ford, and in the *Birds of Western Australia* (Serventy and Whittell, 5th edn.).

—D.L.S.

CORRECTION

In the previous number (Vol. 14, No. 2, p. 55), in the item "The Little Shearwater on St. Alouarn Island, W.A." by S. G. Lane a line has been duplicated and a line dropped. In paragraph 3 line 7 should read: "examined and nearly all showed evidence of recent attention. Fresh foot—"